

VZCZCXYZ0024
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSN #1335 3391604
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 041604Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0404
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMCSUU/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DOJ WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMCSUU/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY 0346
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMIAAA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

UNCLAS SAN SALVADOR 001335

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [ES](#) [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: EL SALVADOR: MERIDA WORKING GROUP IMPLEMENTATION
STRATEGY

¶1. Shortly after receiving the draft Merida Initiative Letter of Agreement (LOA) from INL Washington, the San Salvador Merida Working Group convened December 3 to formalize an implementation strategy and to identify the next steps necessary for realizing Merida Initiative objectives. The DCM-chaired working group, which includes representatives from the FBI, DEA, DOJ, DHS/ICE, RSO, POL/INL, USAID, and MILGROUP developed a comprehensive plan for presenting the draft LOA to key stakeholders in the Salvadoran government, and obtaining Salvadoran buy-in for the projects put forward in the document.

¶2. In light of the close cooperative relationship we enjoy with Salvadoran public security and law enforcement officials, and our ongoing dialogue concerning the Merida Initiative, we do not anticipate any major obstacles in securing ratification of the LOA as drafted. Many of the Merida projects envisioned for El Salvador will build upon already successful programs such as the Transnational Anti-Gang Unit (TAG), the INL Regional Gang Advisor, the DEA-supported vetted unit, and ILEA training. We expect that once the LOA is finalized and the Merida funds arrive at post, we can quickly move forward with project implementation.

¶3. In the coming days, we will be presenting the draft LOA to the Ministry of Public Security and Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Director of the National Civilian Police, and the Attorney General. These meetings will also allow us to further engage Salvadoran counterparts and ensure that the GOES will allocate adequate human and financial resources to the Merida programs designed to strengthen law enforcement capabilities, deter transnational crime and human trafficking, and strengthen judicial institutions.

¶4. Additionally, Scot Thomasson, Chief of International Affairs in the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), briefed the working group on the contributions a regional ATF Advisor could make to Merida initiatives. LEGAT cited cases he has worked in Guatemala where ATF assistance could make a significant impact.

¶5. Mission will promptly notify Department and all concerned of the outcome of our Merida LOA discussions with the GOES. In the meantime, we welcome any additional input and suggestions from Washington-based Merida stakeholders.
BLAU